

**Testimony in support of establishing an Office of Community Gun Violence Prevention at the state level**

Senator Osten, Representative Walker, ranking members Miner and France and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee: My name is Karen Edwards. I live in Stamford. I am a Professor of Public Health and a retired pediatrician/ public health professional. **I am testifying in support of the \$3.6 million included in the Governor's budget adjustment bill for the Department of Public Health to fund gun violence prevention programs.**

As a pediatrician, public health professional and parent, I strongly support this budget adjustment because it will provide a foundation to address gun violence, a true public health crisis, through PREVENTION.

Gun violence is a leading cause of preventable death and injury and disproportionately affects people from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds. Last year, in Connecticut, gun homicides were the highest they have been in 25 years, and at almost double the number that occurred in 2018.

The impact of gun violence is broad. In addition to those it kills and injures, it affects those who witness it, especially children, and those who live with fear of gun violence in their communities. The negative impact on individuals living in communities with high levels of gun violence urgently requires a preventive solution.

As with any successful public health intervention, strategies to prevent gun violence must involve community stakeholders working in partnership with dedicated staff who are experts in data collection and analysis. With coordinated planning and assessment of preventive interventions, the collected evaluative data can be used for program improvement and to secure ongoing funding. I thank the Governor for proposing \$3.6 million to fund community gun violence prevention programs and I strongly urge the legislature to do more by creating an Office of Gun Violence Prevention in the Department of Public Health and committing to more substantial levels of funding.

We can't afford to delay implementing these strategies to prevent gun violence. Children and teens are dying, being injured and being otherwise negatively impacted for life. We must take action so that all Connecticut children have the best chance to survive and thrive into healthy adulthood. I support the establishment of an Office of Gun Violence Prevention as the most effective path to accomplishing this and urge the legislature to commit to more substantial levels of funding.

Thank you to the Committee for hearing my testimony.

Karen Edwards MD MPH  
Stamford CT